**What to Say to Parents**

Start the conversation by asking families what their hopes and dreams for their preschool children are, giving them time to share, asking them what they can do at home to support that dream, and then connecting their answers to attendance.

The following address some of the issues that typically arise in preschool. Choose one or two points at a time that reflect the concern you want to address

* **Preschool may seem like a time just to play, but it’s really about building a foundation for your child to succeed in school.** Children learn skills that will help them to read and do math. Storytelling builds vocabulary and starts the reading readiness cycle; playing with blocks develops counting and sorting skills and introduces STEM concepts. And they learn social skills, like working well with others and using words to express emotions. Good attendance helps children build these skills.
* **Children who miss too many days of preschool can miss out on the important lessons learned there.** The lessons children learn one week build off what they learned the week before. If children miss too many days, it’s harder for them to learn. How many days are too many? ? Any missed days can make a difference, but the more the child misses, the bigger the impact on learning. Researchers have found that missing 10 percent of the year is a particular problem. That can be just one day every two weeks, and those absences can add up before you know it.
* **These absences can impact children beyond preschool.** If chronic absence continues into kindergarten, it can leave a child struggling to read in later grades. These students are more likely to be held back in a later grade and more likely to miss too much school when they’re older.
* **Some absences are unavoidable.** We understand that children get sick and need to stay home sometimes. The important thing is to get your children to preschool as often as possible. Avoid absences whenever possible.
* **Excused absences can be a problem, not just unexcused.** Of course we want all parents to let us know when their children will miss preschool, but remember that any absence can have an impact on your child’s learning.
* **Absences can be a problem whether they occur every now and then or all at once.** Occasional absences can quickly add up to too many missed days. You should make sure you’re tracking attendance at home, so you know how many days your child misses.
* **Preschool is a great time to start building a habit** of good attendance. Preschoolers are learning to be students, and one of the most important lessons they can learn is showing up on time.
* **You can help your child attend regularly be setting a regular bedtime and morning routine.** Make sure they get 9 to 11 hours of sleep. You can put out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
* **Try to avoid extended vacations that require your children to miss school.** Try to line up vacations with the school’s schedule. The same goes for doctor’s appointments.
* **Please ask for help if you need it.** Sometimes unexpected problems come up – another child is sick, or your car breaks down, or you have to move suddenly. Let the teacher and preschool director know what’s happening. They can connect you with other parents or to local community organizations that can help. They can also work with you on a plan for friends and family whom you can call when problems arise.
* **Above all, set an example for your child.** Show him or her that attendance matters to you and that you won’t allow an absence unless someone is truly sick.